Vol. 15.6 November/December 2010

Suzuki Piano Basics Foundation News

To facilitate, promote, and educate the public on the way of teaching and playing the piano taught at the Talent Education Research Institute in Matsumoto, Japan by Dr. Haruko Kataoka

Piano Basics Foundation News

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Next Deadline: November 25, 2010

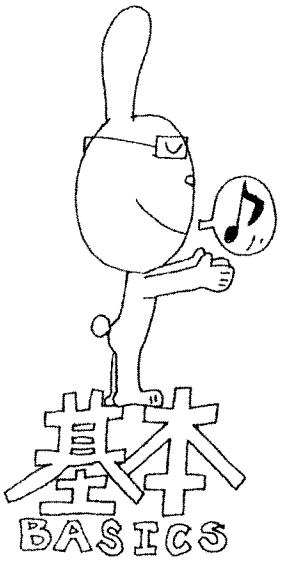
Basics

By Haruko Kataoka

From the Matsumoto Suzuki Piano Newsletter
January 21, 1993
Reprinted in the Newsletter, Special Issue No. 12
June 25, 2010
Translated by Chisa Aoki and Teri Paradero
Edited by Karen Hagberg
Illustrations by Juri Kataoka

When looking up the word *basics* in the Japanese dictionary, it says "the foundation of any pursuit from which develops growth and change." Furthermore, upon looking up the term *foundation* we find it defined as "the most important, crucial juncture in any discipline." This is so true. In the beginning of any learning process, we must handle the basics with the utmost care.

The study of academic subjects in school, whether it be Japanese, mathematics, English, etc, inevitably involves very important basics pertinent to each discipline. I know a student who attended an interim school where he focused on basic skills and theory of mathematics for a year while he was waiting for another chance to enter a university. As a result of this work, he developed the confidence to solve any problem he encountered.



Basics are of utmost importance in the world of sports as well. Being a physical discipline, results are immediately apparent depending on how the body is used. Therefore, those in sports never fail to be aware of the basics and to take care of them.

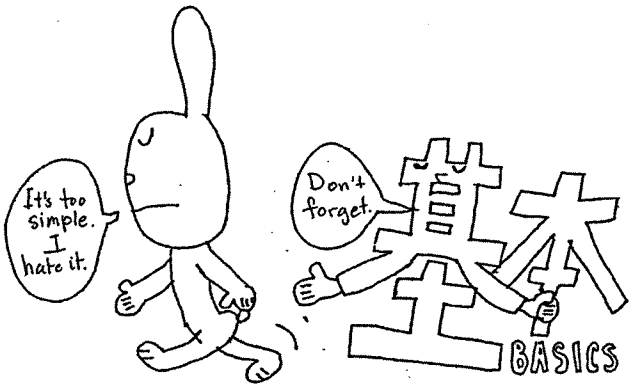
Music is the same. The way in which the piano is played is also the same. When the basics in piano playing become abilities, any piece can be understood and then it becomes possible to be able to play any piece.

(Continued on page 2)

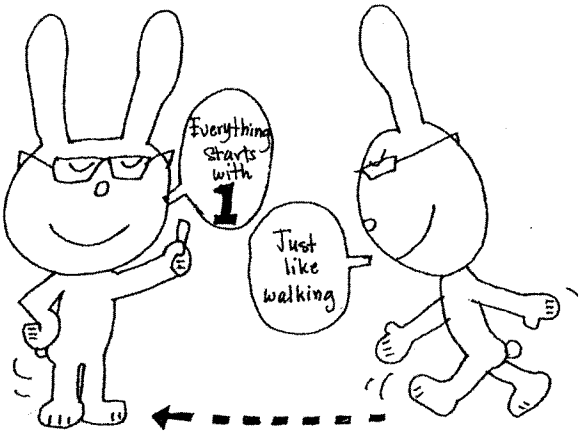
However, the way children have been traditionally educated in music has been based on the mistaken premise that children are naive and immature. Music has been taught irresponsibly as fun/play time and as recreational activity, forgetting the basics altogether. Music is sound. It is not something one can see. You cannot touch or hold it in your hand. Therefore it is easy to lose focus and teach in a careless, superficial and improper way.

Architecture is, quite obviously, an exact science. If a structure is built carelessly, disregarding building codes, it will not be safe. Thus we find the same situation in buildings. Buildings constructed with disregard to the basics will result in disaster, just like the six-story building in Egypt that collapsed during an earthquake (magnitude 5.8 Richter scale, October 12, 1992 in Cairo, resulting in 552 fatalities).

It is clearly evident that if the first floor of a building is not built properly, it is impossible to build the second floor let alone a fifth floor. However, in the world of music education, we see teachers working on the fifth floor while carelessly ignoring the basics and without a solid first or second floor. The reason why we collapse under the pressure of a state of emergency (when performing in a concert, taking an entrance exam, etc) is the same as a carelessly constructed building.



What are the basics for music? In the case of piano, the fundamental basic is how to produce tone that is the most musical, heartfelt and ringing. In order to produce such a tone, both a musical instrument (such as a piano) and a human being is



necessary. The other basic issue concerns the condition of the human body that is able to control this musical instrument.

Whenever a human being does something physical, it is of utmost importance to take care of maintaining a natural body without the use of any unnatural physical force. In order to play the piano, we use our fingers. To figure out how to be able to use the fingers in the most natural and effortless way is the foundation of piano playing. Furthermore, basics are always simple. They are so simple that human beings tend to forget them. For some unknown reason, human beings are drawn to complex challenges. Of course, this is not necessarily a bad human trait, but we must not forget the simple basics.

From early times, prominent music pedagogues have been well aware of the simplicity of basics. With this understanding, they composed practice pieces or etudes (Czerny and Hanon, among many) that are very correct theoretically speaking and effectively reinforce basic techniques. Adults, armed with the understanding of the importance of the basics, can commit to doing many repetitions of simple basics using these traditional, theoretically correct etudes. However, if children are made to work only on the basics in these kinds of etudes, they will become bored and start to dislike music.

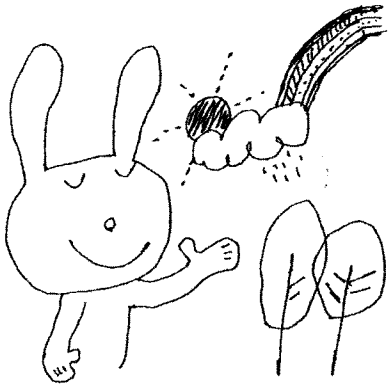
Consequently, we must find a teaching method that isolates the basics while using pieces (Suzuki repertoire) that are musically enjoyable for

(Continued on page 3)

Basics *(Continued from page 2)*

children. Those of us who teach children must be very careful. Mothers...please do not feel bad or think that your children don't measure up just because they are assigned the same things over and over. Please do cooperate with this method.

Let us study the basics from Book 1, and then again in Book 2, Book 3, Book 4, and so on. The repertoire gradually becomes a little difficult but the basics are always the same, and will continue to be studied in advanced pieces. The basics are the same for advanced students. Just as we watch our steps when we walk, let us never forget that, no matter what we do, we must always start with step one.



2011 Sacramento 10-Piano Concert

The 10-Piano Concert in Sacramento will be held on August 13, 2011. Students of Suzuki Piano Basics Foundation members who are actively studying at workshops with Japanese teachers are eligible to bring students to perform in the concert. If you have any intention of making an application for a student to perform, please contact Linda Nakagawa g.nakagawa@comcast.net immediately to express your interest so that the program may be determined. Students will be required to register by mid December.

February Workshops

Teachers from Japan will conduct 5-day workshops in Atlanta, Georgia and in Orange County, California in February 2011. Please see Upcoming Events on page 8 for dates and contact information. We hope you can all consider attending one or both of these events and possibly to bring a student. We all need a week for ourselves to concentrate on the art of teaching once or twice a year. Hope to see you there.

Attention Members

Dues for the calendar year 2011 are due and payable between now and March 1, 2011. ***As noted in the previous newsletter, by action of the General Membership Meeting in July, the fee for membership has been raised to $45.*** As usual, we do not routinely send out separate bills to individuals, trusting our members to renew in time to appear in our annual directory. Please make checks payable to Suzuki Piano Basics Foundation and send to Linda Nakagawa, Treasurer, 242 River Acres Drive, Sacramento, CA 95831. Thank you for all your continued support!

Piano Basics Foundation Upcoming Workshops/Events

February10-14 2011
Orange County, California
Suzuki Piano Basics Workshops with
Keiko Kawamura & Keiko Ogiwara
Contact Mei Ihara 714-997-8692
mihara@socal.rr.com

February 17-21, 2011
Atlanta, Georgia
Suzuki Piano Basics Workshops with
Keiko Kawamura & Keiko Ogiwara
Contact: Pam Smith 770-457-5144
pamela_n_smith@bellsouth.net

July 30-August 13, 2011
Davis, California
Mondavi Center for the Arts
International Suzuki Piano Basics 10-Piano Concert
Contact: Linda Nakagawa 916-422-2952
g.nakagawa@comcast.net

The events listed above are for the information of Suzuki Piano Basics Foundation members and others. Suzuki Piano Basics Foundation does not endorse, sanction, or sponsor events.

To add or change items on this list and on the Suzuki Piano Basics website, contact Karen Hagberg (kh@hagbergsuzuki.com, 585-244-0490).

Announcing *DEEPLY DISCOUNTED* Suzuki Piano Basics Starter Packs

For a limited time, Suzuki Piano Basics Foundation is pleased to offer its members Starter Packs for your students at a price even lower than our usual discounted price for materials. As usual, all materials are sent to Suzuki Piano Basics Foundation Members free of postage. We hope you can take advantage of this unique opportunity.

Starter Pack #1 $50.00	**CD's**	**Kataoka recordings of Books 1-3**
	Books	**Nurtured by Love, by Shinichi Suzuki**
		Sensibility and Education, by Haruko Kataoka
		How to Teach Beginners (Books 1-2), by Haruko Kataoka
Starter Pack #2 $25.00	**Books**	**Nurtured by Love, by Shinichi Suzuki**
		Sensibility and Education, by Haruko Kataoka
		How to Teach Beginners (Books 1-2), by Haruko Kataoka

Please use order form enclosed with this newsletter or contact Linda Nakagawa, Treasurer, 242 River Acres Drive, Sacramento, California 95831 g.nakagawa@comcast.net

Suzuki Piano Basics Web Site and discussion group:

http://core.ecu.edu/hist/wilburnk/SuzukiPianoBasics